

# Mrs. Sears Slain with a Hand-Saw.—The Aged Woman Horribly Butchered by Her Husband.

Saturday afternoon, the little village of Troy Grove, probably better known as Homer, in the township of Troy Grove, about 20 miles northwest of this city, was the scene of the most horrible murder ever perpetrated inside the limits of La Salle county. Not since the diabolical outrage and murder of poor little Maggie Cuddy, some years ago, near Utica, has such a fiendish crime wrought consternation in the hearts of the people of this section. This brutal and unprovoked murder by an aged man on his still more aged wife is, indeed, almost too ghastly and sickening in its details for publication. The ages of the parties to the bloody transaction is given by one of our correspondents and others differently. One places the age of the murderer at 84 and his wife at 72, while another has the age of the former 66 and his wife 76, which is probably the more correct.

In a little farm building on the outskirts of the village, there came to reside, two months ago, from Harvard, this state, Hiram Sears, Sr., and his wife, the murderer and his victim, together with his son, Hiram Sears, Jr., and the latter's wife and five or six small children. Hiram Sears was given employment by the Spring Valley road as foreman of the section gang. No forebodings of the dreadful calamity which happened Saturday afternoon, cast their slightest shadows over the little household. Hiram Sears, though somewhat exacting and of a very jealous disposition, never evinced any such murderous traits as to make him dreaded by the family. For the past three years, however, slight domestic quarrels occurred at intervals, but even these were unheeded. The direct cause which led to the bloody tragedy happened during the week preceding the murder. Hiram Sears accused his aged wife of the practices of witchcraft, that a man by the name of "Squire Moloney had put the 'stuff' into her head and that she was endeavoring to bewitch him. Mrs. Sears did not think the matter worthy of dispute, and when on Saturday afternoon between the hours of three and four o'clock, he entered the house with a carpenter's hand saw and made the same accusations which the woman did not deny. Then followed this most bloody and inhuman butchery. Sears attacked his wife with the saw which has a short thin blade and is as deadly a weapon in the hands of an infuriated man as a keen cutting sabre. Mrs. Sears cried to him to stop but he replied that he would not, and that he was going to smother her. She fled toward her bed room while he continued striking her, and getting inside she locked the door, but he soon forced his way through and deliberately secured the door from the inside, and then began his work of murder amidst the agonizing cries of his aged and invalid wife for mercy, which fell cold on the brute's heart, as he slashed and carved her until satisfied that his fearful crime was complete. He then fled toward the woods near by. While this bloody tragedy was being enacted in the bedroom, the younger Mrs. Sears ran to a neighboring house with her children for protection and calling for assistance, which was too late when it arrived. There a scene which would horrify the stoutest heart met the gaze of those who arrived at the little one story house. On the bed room floor lay the poor woman, her gray hair floating in a pool of blood. There was blood on the walls and on the bed, and the room had the appearance of a veritable slaughter house. The woman's skull was smashed in by the saw blade in several places. There were four deep and distinct gashes on the head and one on the neck, while the lower jaw bone was broken and one ear cut off. The shoulders and upper portion of the body were also fearfully mutilated. The hands which the poor woman threw up in mute appeal that her life might be spared were mangled in the most shocking manner. It was truly a sight to appal the stoutest heart. The victim was, of course, unconscious and remained so for about two hours after the assault, when she died shrouded in her blood-soaked garments.

The murderer was placed under arrest by Constable John Stevenson, of the village at ten o'clock that night, who found him at Mr. Peterson's boarding house. There being no calaboose in the village, the prisoner was handcuffed and guarded in Stevenson's hall. An inquest was held Sunday afternoon, the jury rendering a verdict in accordance with the above statements of the murderer. Sunday night the prisoner asked Mr. Stevenson to truthfully answer one question which he would put to him. The officer replied that if he answered him at all it would be the truth. The prisoner then said: "Is she dead?" and being answered in the affirmative, replied: "It can't be helped now; I am ready to die now." When he was arrested by the officer he denied all knowledge of the tragedy, and that his name was not Sears. On being searched two knives, one with a blade four inches long, and a large, heavy, old fashioned razor were found in his pockets, which he strongly objected to giving up. As to his sanity, that had never before been questioned up to the time of the murder. He has acted as rationally as usual and takes the matter as coolly and unconcerned as though he was charged with a trifling misdemeanor. When he was informed that he would be brought to the county jail, he asked to be permitted to bring along his clothes, bedding, &c., naming each article that belonged to him in the house, and which, together with other statements made by him were fully verified by the officer and found to be just as represented. Monday noon the murderer, in the custody of Officer Stevenson and John Reichardt, arrived here over the Paw Paw road. He was brought to Sheriff Milligan's office and a large crowd soon gathered in the

room and thronged the corridors, desiring to gratify a morbid curiosity by seeing the man who had literally chopped his aged wife to death. The prisoner is a man below medium stature, of slight build and would weigh about 140 pounds, and was poorly dressed. His long hair and full beard were white with age and he looked anything but a murderer. In fact there was an air of simplicity and innocence about the gray-haired fiend that would make one seriously disbelieve that he was the author of such a crime. After a short time spent in the Sheriff's office, the prisoner was lodged in the jail and assigned a separate cell. His son Hiram desires the father's speedy prosecution and punishment, which will undoubtedly be either hanging or a life sentence. The latter would scarcely be adequate punishment for the great crime, as the prisoner has but a few years to live at best, though this may be his sentence on account of his years. The murderer is of German descent and a native of York state, having been married 30 years. He has two widowed daughters at Rockford, and one son as formerly stated. The family are in poor circumstances. On Wednesday the body was brought to Rockford for interment. Mr. Stevenson says that he has resided in the village of Homer for 26 years, and that this was the first murder in that vicinity. There were threats of lynching the prisoner Sunday night, but no organized effort was made on account of the lack of leadership. The weapon with which the ghastly crime was committed was brought here stained with blood and with the gray hairs of the victim clinging to the gory blade.

Tuesday the musical twitter of the first bird of spring was heard, indicating the near approach of that season. The atmosphere was delightful, and overcoats, scarfs and mittens were laid away. The hand organ fiend was no doubt heading in this direction, while the town had begun their marble playing on the corners of remote streets and "knuckle down tighter" could be heard. Thursday opened with a terrific wind storm, and the air was filled with fine snow and the frost had an eager and nipping desire. These are nature's laws of change. They diversify what would otherwise be a monotonous existence. The intense cold disintegrates the soil, and augur-like, brings up new and fresh soil from below. Spring rains and sunshine add life and beauty to the broad, bare earth, and summer's heat produces the bountiful harvest. But change is written over all. This is the poetry of the situation; the reality is not so easy to endure when a gentle spring day is followed by a genuine Dakota blizzard. All the philosophy of human nature is required to grin and endure it.

The frontpiece of the March *Scribner* is Emilio Castelar, the famous Spanish republican and politician, who is the subject of an article and reminiscences besides. The war article is Bull's "Shiloh Reviewed," in which General Buell attacks Gen. Grant's paper on "Shiloh," and also touches up Gen. Sherman. The "Memoranda" also contains letters on the Shiloh controversy. The "Strength and Weakness of Socialism" will have somewhat of a local interest, since it appears this week that the subject has been brought to our very doors and homes. Mr. Howell's new story brings the reader in contact with a view of Boston life which they have not yet seen in Mr. Howell's writing. The other contents are full and raised, and the illustrations numerous and elegant, as usual.

The teachers' meeting at Earlville last week was a decided success, the rooms being so crowded by teachers from adjoining districts that many could not even get standing room. The exercises were very interesting, and profitable, no doubt.

The second annual meeting of the Central Illinois Association will be held at Peoria, March 12 and 13, at the High School building. A very elaborate programme has been arranged, the papers covering a wide range of subjects of daily interest and concern to teachers. The railroad will return teachers at one third fare, and hotels will make some reductions in rates. The meeting promises to be largely attended.

Cora Whalley, the dissolute woman who recently escaped from the county house, was arrested by Marshal Maher yesterday forenoon and taken before Esq. Galvin, who sentenced her to sixty days in the county jail. She applied at a house on the west side Thursday night for something to eat and asked to be permitted to remain. The kind woman had not the heart to turn her out in the storm, and she was given shelter.

Nevada seems to be the paradise of the school teachers. The annual report of the Bureau of Education, which has just been given to the public, states that the average salary of male teachers in Nevada is \$140 per month and for women \$96. Intellectual Maine goes to the other extreme and pays the woman teachers \$16 per month. The average salary for teachers per month is reported from all the States except Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, and Texas, and Territory. In those States in which no distinction of sex is made in reporting this item (Alabama, Delaware, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina and Tennessee), the average salary ranges from \$27.87 (in Kentucky) to \$47.75 (in Missouri). It should be noted that the report from Kentucky includes only white schools. In this state the average salary in city and graded schools for whites is \$71.35. For the states not included in the foregoing statement the lowest average salary per month is, for men, \$26.92 (South Carolina), for women, \$10.28 (Maine).

The postoffice department has adopted and will shortly issue a stamped letter sheet, the useful invention of the United States Postal Note Company of New York. It is a letter sheet and an envelope combined, a perfect line running around the sheet with the narrow space outside of the line overprinted with teachings as to the

sheet may be folded and securely fastened. The letter, when ready for mailing, resembles the style in use before envelopes were invented. This the government stamps is loose sheets and collectively in pads, and will be put on sale soon at the leading postoffices throughout the country. It is expected to replace the postal card and everyone cannot read it.

A nail mill is the latest industry, on paper, of La Salle.

## Vicinity Items.

The late firm of Lacer & Smith has opened a dry goods store at Spring Valley. The Nora Lytton Dramatic Company stranded and gave up the ghost at Marseilles recently.

Rose Easton, whom Ottawa theatre goes will doubtless remember as the "star" who took stardom in the "The Virginian." The Little Village of Lanville, in Bureau county, has already begun preparations for the celebration of Decoration Day next May, by engaging General Prentiss and taking subscriptions for the occasion.

William S. Bailey, father of the senator of the Princeton Republican, died at Nashville Tenn., Saturday, at the age of 80 years. He was an anti-slavery agitator, and prominently identified in the fortunes of the "underground railway" during the last years of slavery.

Dwight Starr, some weeks ago Fred Mathieson, publisher of the Odell paper, wrote a firm in Chicago an obscene and abusive letter because they asked him to pay his bill. The communication was turned over to the postoffice authorities, a warrant for his arrest followed, and on Wednesday he was taken to Chicago for a hearing.

Miss Pearson, a pretty Swede, who was in the employ of a farmer named William McFarlane, living near Joliet, brought suit against the latter for kissing her contrary to the statutes in such cases made and provided. It cost Mc, who is a wealthy man, just \$180 for that one kiss—at least, that was the verdict rendered by the jury Saturday.

This is how some Joliet citizens observe the Lord's day as taken from a paper of that city: "Some Joliet lovers of chicken fights went to Niles Center to contest last Sunday, when and where forty-five battles were fought, and \$2,500 changed hands. A half dozen of the Joliet betters came home at the expense of the other three, having bet and lost."

On Tuesday, Spring Valley held its first election, the following being the result, 217 votes being polled: Mayor, Chas. J. Devlin; city clerk, Michael Stanton; city attorney, A. R. Greenwald; police magistrate, L. A. McNeil; city treasurer, Scott Brown; aldermen, First ward, Michael Murphy; Thos. Terry; Second ward, Henry Dugan; James Thom; Third ward, V. H. Weissenburger; Thos. Dwyer. The mayor appointed James Mutha city marshal.

The Streator Times is just now about up to its neck in libel suits, which seem to follow each other with such persistent regularity as to become monotonous. He has during the past ten days been sued for libel four times, and the returns are not all in yet. The last libel suit he is called upon to face was on account of a business advertisement which was charged up at the rate of ten cents a line. Mike Gibson, of Streator, is the aggrieved individual who is after Hynes this time.

Thursday Wallace Waterman, who was sent up from Sycamore to the penitentiary for a year, having been convicted of grave robbery, served out his sentence and was given his liberty. In the prison he was a very exemplary young man, having been employed as a hospital steward, being a medical student at Rush College at the time of his arrest. It is now firmly believed by those conversant with the circumstances that an unpardonable blunder was committed in convicting young Waterman, and that another fellow, who skipped to Canada, was the real culprit.

A switch engine of the Pekin road, which left that city Tuesday noon, as a pusher for conductor Hall's train, was returning shortly after, and when at the top of the Ransom hill, without a word of warning, the boiler exploded with great violence, blowing the engineer, Edward Ashline, over the telegraph wires, over 100 yards distant, his injuries being of such a nature that he lived but a few hours after. Will Canfield, the fireman, was picked up near the scene of the explosion unconscious, and was severely injured. The smoke stack was blown a good distance, and pieces of a mile from the scene. The engine was blown into shreds, and the engine completely demolished. It is thought the fireman will recover.

Those of La Salle's citizens who were awake at that hour Sunday night, might have witnessed a novel and mournful spectacle—a midnight funeral. After a few months' illness ex-city treasurer, John Black, one of the most popular and highly respected young men that ever lived in that city, died Saturday night of quick consumption. He was a member of the A. O. U. which together with a large concourse of his friends on foot and in carriages, escorted the remains to the Rock Island depot, from whence the body was taken to Iowa City for interment. The funeral was affecting and impressive. Mr. Black, who was 30 years of age on the night of the funeral, had been not long married to a beautiful and accomplished lady of New York city.

## From Ransom.

RANSOM, Feb. 25.—Dr. Ives, of Farm Ridge, was in town Sunday.

On Saturday Mr. and Mrs. Henry Gham were called on to mourn the loss of their eldest son, aged fourteen years. The body was interred on Sunday, a large concourse of friends following the remains to the cemetery. The bereaved parents have the sympathy of their friends in their hours of sorrow.

Many of the Ransoms went down near Kernan Tuesday to see the wreck caused by the bursting of a locomotive boiler. Along the Pekin line would be a good route for a life insurance agent to travel now.

Dan Trainor, of Ottawa, spent a few days this week with his friend Carroll Boyle. John Scheeleber went to Ames, Iowa, Tuesday, to study at the I. A. C. which is located there.

Rev. Wayman, of Morton, is visiting at his daughter's, Mrs. W. C. Colburn. The dance given by the band Monday night was a success. All who attended had a merry time.

Mary Sinnott, of your city, spent Sunday with her friend Miss Phillips. Owing to the rain the attendance at the oyster supper, given by the ladies of the M. E. church last evening, was small. The ladies deserve credit for the excellent supper they prepared.

Joe Patten, of Sannimia, is visiting his Ransom friends. Miss Sarah G. Cates is visiting in Seneca.

## From Ophir.

OPHIR, Feb. 23.—Pleasant weather this for winter.

Ed. Willey and family have gone to Kansas to make that their future home. Henry Hornberger and Miss Mary Roth were married last Thursday in Mendota. Mr. Henry Miller and Miss Clara Hesenberger were the same day made one. Pedro wishes them joy.

Grandma Phillips, who spent the fall and winter with her son Joe at Plainfield, returned home last week.

Mr. Hapeman is selling a great deal of lumber in Homer. He has a good stock of No. 1 lumber, and treats all alike.

Our elevator is doing nothing owing to the poor roads.

Tell E. Graph, of Homer, to the Mendota Bulletin, in a recent issue, had this to say: "Pedro, of the FREE TRADER, says Triumph is doing lots of business, while our Homer elevator, &c., is doing nothing. Pedro is mistaken, there was \$1000 worth of business done there last week." Holy Moses, T. E. G., Homer never saw the day that he did \$1000 worth of business. You must be sadly off your base, or else you are lacking brains. Don't know which.

Mr. Pat Devine has moved on Mr. O'Connor's farm, near the suburbs of Homer. Walter Reeder has gone to Kansas to join his brother Will.

The Homer Mill will give a select ball in Homer soon. It is distinctly understood that no one will be admitted unless holding an invitation card.

Homer is laboring with a revival. Mr. Peck, a converted Jew, is the exhorter. Link Short has gone to Tennessee on a prospecting tour.

Farmers, test your seed corn early, as there is lots of it that is worthless.

Our Scotch friends have put in a big week at curling for the championship and a Scotch medal. Will give particulars in my next.

Mr. Curry, of Milwaukee, is here visiting friends and seeing his best girl.

Mr. Chester McLaughlin has enrolled himself on the FREE TRADER list. Some one has started the story that Ches. was going to work at Spring Valley this summer. Such is not the fact; he will stay at home, as he can find plenty to do at his trade here, and he says \$200 per day will be his charges. Chester is one of the best workmen that we have in this part of the county, as every one can testify to that ever had him employed. Give him a call and get his estimates on building before you hire any one else.

David Kurt's gun lottery came off according to programme. Everything was fair and above board. Wm. P. Wixom held the lucky No. 21. Billy set them up to the boys right royally.

The great, the immense J. & N. R. R. whose owners are worth millions, pay their section hands the enormous sum of \$1.10 per day. Hadn't they better do as McCorkin did, have a look-out.

Any pleasant Saturday afternoon in Homer, no one will have any trouble in counting from 18 to 18 school mams and duds pedagogues, and some of them will make a man sick to see the smart antics displayed by them. Go take a tumble.

In conversation with a granger from No. 9, Troy Grove, he told me that Billy Wixom is the best teacher they ever had in the school. Pedro believes that Will has good sense, and is a perfect gentleman, and one that is not afraid to work.

Our correspondent sends a lengthy account of the Homer horror, the facts of which are embodied in the article on that subject with others in another place. It is not fair to him that the public should think he had neglected the most important item. "Pedro" is a model correspondent and we want him and the rest of world to know that we know it.—Eos.

## From Waltham.

WALTHAM, Feb. 23.—Delightful weather. Snow all gone, leaving roads in good traveling condition.

Jacob Barr is on a visit to Ohio. We expect him to return this week.

Peter Hanley has his mind set on fencing, and the frost has not left the ground. Good idea no doubt.

Bill Scott and Neil Peterson, our Waltham champion card players, went to Utica and put up five dollars on cards and got badly beat. That is too bad, too bad.

James Hanley says he can tell more lies than Dan Carra can begin to. Dan says it is a lie, for he can beat old Napoleon himself.

John Curtin's meat wagon is still on the same route northwest. Hurrah for small pox.

Eddie Waldron says he will bet any amount of money that he can tell how many rows of corn there are between his place and Carigan's, for many a night he was a stray there till morning.

The grandest surprise party of the season was given at the residence of Harry McNally last week. It was got up by the Kinnegars, brothers and sisters. Dancing and many funny games held the amusement for the evening. At 12 sharp as delightful a supper was served as man could wish to partake of and dancing was prolonged till quite a late hour, and all returned to their homes happy and well pleased.

The school district No. 1 had quite an excitement yesterday. The boys climbed up in the garret and tried to rule the school, but after 4 o'clock the school ruled the boys. Sad for the boys.

We are informed that Nora Murphy will teach in district No. 6 this summer. Thomas Graham says she can't possibly go if money can hire her to stay, as he is going to study music and economy. What struck Tom?

We understand that John Shannon, of Utica, was in this vicinity last week breaking corn stalks.

Miss Fanny Dana has returned from Chicago. Dick Edgecomb is on the sick list this week. He was trying his strength with Willie Wilson pulling stick and badly strained himself.

The Morris consins gave the draw raffie of the season last week at James Brown's. Harry McNally won the violin. After the raffie was over dancing followed and was kept up till the wee small hours of morning.

John Galvin, who owns the Hickey farm, was offered one hundred dollars, an acre last week by John Larkin.

Mr. Cary was the guest of Mrs. Gilligan last Sunday.

Thomas Graham went to La Salle last Sunday and was stopped on his way home by James Hickey and had a very pleasant time till a very late hour. The ring was formed and all went right through, but the fish was shy and wouldn't bite.

Thomas Hanly says he can dance thirty-two bars without letting one foot strike the other, and John Kinnegar, Jr., is not far behind with his fancy steps.

John Muir, we hear, is still going northward. We fear his intention is to take one of our Waltham belles to keep house.

Royal Wilsey, if you give that girl another orange she will sing for four hours. Ha! ha.

The surprise party at John Kinnegar's was a grand success. John Graham went west afterward and why? Poor boy.

When Baby was sick, we gave her CASTORIA. When she was a Child, she cried for CASTORIA. When she became Miss, she clung to CASTORIA. When she had Children, she gave them CASTORIA.

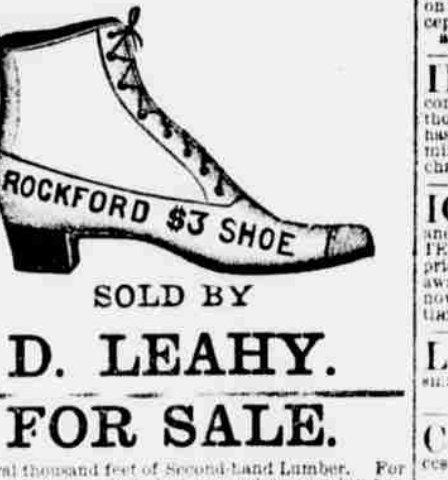


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